BALTIMORE SUN

[redacted]

15 JUN 1971

The Vietnam Era

In mid-1967 Robert S. McNamara, then Secretary of Defense, commissioned a study of American involvement in Vietnam. His obvious concern was to try to get on record the story of how and why the United States had become entangled in a mainland-Asian conflict that had by then gone sour, and was to go more sour: what our supposed purposes had been, and how we went about trying to satisfy them, and what went wrong, and why.

The result, completed the next year and held secret until now, has been obtained by the New York *Times*, which has arranged and is publishing it. It is a report by many hands, running to some 1.5 million words, plus another 1 million words of documentation. In its original form it is less than fully organized, and its authors reached no summary conclusions. It has gaps, notably the absence of a section on diplomatic maneuver and a lack of intimate White House material. It is a mass of fact and opinion. Yet it is still an invaluable assessment of the course of American policy in Southeast Asia through the period it covers.

No overall blame is directly assigned, or could be; but the study traces direct military involvement to the Truman administration's decision to help France against the Vietminh, the Eisenhower administration's decision to support the new state of South Vietnam, the Kennedy administration's change from a "limited-risk gamble" into "broad commitment" and the Johnson administration's massive escalation. The method through all those years was generally one of following will-o'-the-wisps, first toward modest success, then toward victory, then toward not being defeated—advisers, strategic-hamlet and other "pacification" devices, search-and destroy, body counts, dependence on the monsoons, bombing, bombing and more bombing—in many cases against the better advice of the intelligence-gatherers and occasionally against the opinion of some of the wiser heads among the military.

But there was from the start a rationale: the containment of communism in Asia. Stated at its simplest the rationale was the "domino theory." By 1967 even this rationale was being questioned, but it continued to prevail, perhaps because no one could quite admit that the war was purposeless, and essentially it seems to prevail today, four years after Mr. McNamara set his study in motion.

It is difficult otherwise, for example, to explain this statement of a later Defense Secretary, Mr. Laird, on this past Sunday: "As long as there are Americans stationed in Vietnam and as we look forward to the transfer of the air, the logistic, the artillery role to the South Vietnamese under the Vietnamization program, we will have combat forces stationed in Vietnam." And it is difficult not to see in this "Vietnamization"—with the planes, the equipment for logistical handling and the artillery of course furnished by the United States—yet one more evanescent will-o'-the-wisp.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
15 JUN 1971

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Viet 'Secrets' Shy on Surprises, Big on Villains

By JERRY GREENE

Washington, June 14—There is something for almost everybody—friend and foe alike—in the lurid details now emerging of the creeping American involvement in the Vietnam war, a participation that grew deeper more swiftly than the public ever knew at the time.

The 40-volume study, a chronological account of U.S. plans, recommendations, decisions and operations covering U.S.-Vietnam relations and activities into 1968, contained no great surprises in the broad sweep of events. But when it broke into public view in the New York Times with reproductions of cablegrams, memoranda and military and diplomatic reports the capital was shaken in no small manner.

For the study, commissioned by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and completed after he left that job for presidency of the World Bank, lifted the secrecy lid on things that a nation normally keeps hidden for 25 years or so after the fact.

Foes and critics of the administration Vietnam policies, past and present, could find grim satisfaction in the revelation that the United States was directing secret South Vietnamese raids into North Vietnam a couple of years before American combat troops were committed to the conflict.

Political and personal enemies of former President Lyndon Johnson can find bitter justification of their contentions of perfidy. LBJ was portrayed as approving future bombing plans in September 1964, during a presidential political campaign, when he was boasting of restraint and belaboring Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) for being trigger-happy.

The fact of the political campaign of 1964 as well as the normal desire for secrecy in military planning led to deception of the American people as well as the Communists in Hanoi, and in some instances, more so.

Yet the friends and supporters of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, under which the Vietnam commitment was solidified and expanded far beyond original intentions, could point to ample evidence that there was great restraint.

It is evident, for example, that Johnson rejected an elaborate, hard proposal advanced by some of his advisers that the U.S. adopt a strategy of provocation, seeking to draw Hanoi into taking action that would justify quick expansion of the war.

Johnson is shown consistently as holding back, turning aside from some of the more belligerent advisers, to find a way out without more war. There are fascinating accounts of how twice the U.S. persuaded Canada to send an envoy to Hanoi with warnings, or appeals, or both, to cool the war off before it got out of hand.

Some of his associates were urging controversial attack on two U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964; a draft of the document had been prepared as early as May of that year.

What comes through strongly from the study is the fact that the U.S. got mixed up in Vietnamese affairs during the Truman administration when a decision was made to help the French fight the "nationalist" Viet-Minh, then led by Ho Chi Minh, who was to show his Communist colors and establish a Red dictatorship in Hanoi only after defeat of the French.

Set Broad Commitment

Under the Eisenhower administration the course was set, to help rescue South Vietnam from Communist domination. The Kennedy administration turned the "limited risk" gamble into a "broad commitment."

By the time Johnson moved into the White House, events in South Vietnam had left him with a fairly clear-cut choice. He could pull the U.S. out of Southeast Asia or he could accept the unhappy probability of much more war.

What comes through even more strongly is the fact that Johnson was getting large amounts of advice about how to run a war from nonmilitary staff members, that there was division within the military on the course that could be followed, that somebody made an awfully wrong guess on how to fight a war in small doses.

The President had warnings. Some of the military people told him that Hanoi would not be scared off by token bombings, that the will of the Communists would not be easily broken. The President was told that some of the elaborate plans submitted to him simply wouldn't accomplish the stated objectives.

Aimed to Avoid Big War

But there was an appeal in this tit-for-tat warfare thing, and in the idea that the massive American threat would surely keep the North Vietnamese from pushing into the face of power and risking a big, deadly conflict.

And it was the "gradual war" path that was followed up to the deployment eventually of 550,000 troops, with no final, conclusive decision in sight.

It can be said safely that if Vietnam taught no other lesson, this involvement served as a convincer that the American public won't buy the concept of a limited war—certainly where the involvement is concealed or cloudy, and where the legitimate aims become obscured to the point of plain frustration and distrust.

The Nixon administration has no intimate concern with the historical account of the original involvement. The White House takes the position that it was given access to all basic information and President Nixon's concern is now working for disengagement, not in assessing blame.

But there is a grave worry around the capital that is shared by the present administration. That is the effect the disclosure of secret state papers may have on relations with other nations who may want diplomatic exchanges kept fairly secure. Hardly anybody could be expected to trust a blabbermouth.

NEW YORK TIMES
15 JUN 1971
STATINTL

KEY TEXTS FR
PENTAGON'S VIETNA

Following are texts of key documents accompanying the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, covering the opening of the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the first half of 1965. Except where excerpting is indicated, the documents are printed verbatim, with only unmistakable typographical errors corrected.

Letter From Rostow Favoring Commitment of Troops by U.S.

Personal letter from Walt W. Rostow, chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council, to Secretary McNamara, Nov. 16, 1964, "Military Dispositions and Political Signals."

Following on our conversation of last night I am concerned that too much thought is being given to the actual damage we do in the North, not enough thought to the signal we wish to send.

The signal consists of three parts:

a) damage to the North is now to be inflicted because they are violating the 1954 and 1962 accords;

b) we are ready and able to go much further than our initial act of damage;

c) we are ready and able to meet any level of escalation they might mount in response, if they are so minded.

Four points follow.

1. I am convinced that we should not go forward into the next stage without a US ground force commitment of some kind:

a. The withdrawal of those ground forces could be a critically important part of our diplomatic bargaining position. Ground forces can sit during a conference more easily than we can maintain a series of mounting air and naval pressures.

b. We must make clear that counter escalation by the Communists will run directly into US strength on the ground; and, therefore the possibility of radically extending their position on the ground at the cost of air and naval damage alone, is ruled out.

c. There is a marginal possibility that in attacking the airfield they were thinking two moves ahead; namely, they might be planning a pre-emptive ground force response to an expected US retaliation for the Bien Hoa attack.

2. The first critical military action against North Vietnam should be designed merely to install the principle that they will, from the present forward, be vulnerable to retaliatory attack in the north for continued violation of the 1954 and 1962 Accords. In other words, we would signal a shift from the principle involved in the Tonkin Gulf response. This means that the initial use of force in the north should be as limited and as unsanguinary as possible. It is the installation of the principle that we are initially interested in, not tit for tat.

3. But our force dispositions to accompany an initial retaliatory move against the north should send three further signals lucidly:

a. that we are putting in place a capacity subsequently to step up direct and naval pressure on the north, if that should be required;

b. that we are prepared to face down any form of escalation North Vietnam might mount on the ground; and

c. that we are putting forces into place to exact retaliation directly against Communist China, if Peiping should join in an escalatory response from Hanoi. The latter could take the form of increased aircraft on Formosa plus, perhaps, a carrier force sitting off China distinguished from the force in the South China Sea.

4. The launching of this track, almost certainly, will require the President to explain to our own people and to the world our intentions and objectives. This will also be perhaps the most persuasive form of communication with Ho and Mao. In addition, I am inclined to think the most direct communication we can mount (perhaps via Vientiane and Warsaw) is desirable, as opposed to the use of cut-outs. They should feel they now confront an LBJ who has made up his mind. Contrary to an anxiety expressed at an earlier stage, I believe it quite possible to communicate the limits as well as the seriousness of our intentions without raising seriously the fear in Hanoi that we intend at our initiative to occupy the Red River Delta, in China, or seek any other objective than the re-installation of the 1954 and 1962 Accords.

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Memo

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appreciation of the view in Hanoi and Peiping of the Southeast Asia problem. I agree almost completely with SNIE 10-3-64 of October 9. Here are the critical passages:

"While they will seek to exploit and encourage the deteriorating situation in Saigon, they probably will avoid actions that would in their view unduly increase the chances of a major US response against North Vietnam (DRV) or Communist China. We are almost certain that both Hanoi and Peiping are anxious not to become involved in the kind of war in which the great weight of superior US weaponry could be brought against them. Even if Hanoi and Peiping estimated that the US would not use nuclear weapons against them, they could not be sure of this. . . .

"In the face of new US pressures against the DRV, further actions by Hanoi and Peiping would be based to a considerable extent on their estimate of US intentions, i.e., whether the US was actually determined to increase its pressures as necessary. Their estimates on this point are probably uncertain, but we believe that fear of provoking severe measures by the US would lead them to temper their responses with a good deal of caution. . . .

"If despite Communist efforts, the US attacks continued, Hanoi's leaders would have to ask themselves whether it was not better to suspend their support of Viet Cong military action rather than suffer the destruction of their major military facilities and the industrial sector of their economy. In the belief that their favor in South Vietnam, they might

Continued

U.S. Asks Lid on War File

Times Refuses, Expects Move For Injunction

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

Attorney General John N. Mitchell asked The New York Times yesterday to cease further publication of a leaked secret Pentagon study on the Vietnam war.

The Times responded last night that it "must respectfully decline the request." In a statement the Times also said:

"We have been informed of the Attorney General's intention to seek an injunction against further publication. We believe that is properly a matter for the courts to decide. The Times will oppose any request for an injunction for the same reason that led us to publish the articles in the first place. We will, of course, abide by the final decision of the court."

Earlier in the day Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, charging a breach of security, said he had requested the Justice Department to investigate the leak of the Pentagon study to the Times.

The Times, in its Tuesday edition, delayed one hour, said a telegram received by Publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger from Mitchell said the Attorney General had been informed by Laird that the material published by the newspaper "contains information relating to the national defense of the United States and bears a top-secret classification.

"As such, publication of this information is directly prohibited by the provisions of the espionage law . . ." the Times quoted the telegram as saying. "Moreover, further publication of information of this character will cause irreparable injury to the defense interests of the United States."

The Times said the telegram also asked for the return of the documents to the Defense Department.

In Washington, John W. Hushen, Justice Department public information director confirmed that Mitchell had sent the telegram and that Assistant Attorney General Robert C. Mardian had mentioned the possibility of an injunction to Harding F. Bancroft, an executive vice president of The Times.

"In response to questions from Harding F. Bancroft, who asked Robert Mardian what would be the government's position if The Times decided not to accede to the request, Mardian said that the government would seek to enforce all applicable statutes, including seeking an injunction to stop further publication," Hushen said.

Laird told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that publication of the papers "violates the security regulations of the United States."

Asked if he knew how the papers fell into the hands of The Times, he replied:

"No, I do not. But there are a very limited number of copies and they will not be hard to track down."

At the White House, Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said that a copy of the Pentagon study, which former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara had ordered on the origins of U.S. involvement in the war, was delivered to the White House yesterday.

Ziegler also charged a security violation, but he would not say whether action would be brought against The Times or against the person or persons who gave the document to the paper, if they are discovered.

Ziegler's comment was generally low key, suggesting that for the time being President Nixon wants to avoid arguing over how the U.S. became involved and whether the Johnson administration misled the public.

While public comment on the documents published in the Times was relatively scarce yesterday, observers speculated on the possible impact on administration policy, on the effect it may have on Senate debate on the McGovern-Hatfield amendment requiring a deadline on troop withdrawals and the long-term political effect.

The White House by its restrained comment indicated it may not have made up its mind on these questions and is awaiting further public reaction.

Ziegler emphasized that the President's first directive to the National Security Council after taking office was to conduct a thorough review of past Vietnam policies. The President then established a "new" policy which he has carried out, Ziegler said.

Although the President did not see the Pentagon study until yesterday, he had access to the papers used in the study as well as documents from other agencies, Ziegler said.

"Complete information" was available to the new administration, which made its own assessment of past policies and then developed its own policy, Ziegler emphasized. He gave no explanation of why the Pentagon document was not at the White House earlier.

The State Department found its copy of the Pentagon study yesterday after rummaging through departmental files. "We didn't know where to begin looking since none of the Department's senior officers was aware of the report," a spokesman said.

A copy of the study is in the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin, Tex., and was available to Mr. Johnson in the preparation of his memoirs, which deals largely with the Vietnam war. The Johnson book is scheduled for publication in the late fall.

Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (R-Ariz.), who ran against Mr. Johnson in 1964 and advocated air attacks on North Vietnam, said he knew all along that the Democratic administration was planning to escalate the war.

Nevertheless, President Johnson "kept reiterating that he would never send American boys to fight in Vietnam," Goldwater said.

"See, I was being called trigger-happy, warmonger, bomb-happy and all the time Johnson was saying he'd never send American boys; I knew damned well he would."

Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-Pa.) called the Pentagon report "instructive" and said: "I think the implication is shocking that a President would know things which he didn't say which ran counter to the themes of his campaign."

When Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) said Congress has "not known what is going on," Laird replied: "As Secretary of Defense I have not gone back to condemn acts by previous administrations but have tried to look to the future."

Symington, meanwhile, called for a full congressional inquiry into the disclosures, which he called "shocking." He said joint House-Senate hearings should be held.

Despite the fact that The Times obtained copies of the study, Laird declined immediately to make it available to Congress, commenting that "I hope we don't spend all of our time debating mistakes of the past."

Air War Plans Set Before '64 Election

By Chalmers M. Roberts
Washington Post Staff Writer

In the months between the August, 1964, Tonkin Gulf incident and President Johnson's November victory over Sen. Barry Goldwater the United States prepared a host of secret plans for air war against North Vietnam, according to government documents printed yesterday in the New York Times.

The planning pace was stepped up, it appears, after the election but Mr. Johnson did not give approval for action until the Vietcong attacks on American troops and installations in February, 1965.

Interwoven in some of the documents, although there is no document indicating presidential approval, is the suggestion that some preparatory American moves and sabotage action against North Vietnam might be carried out in such a way as to "provoke" a North Vietnamese response which in turn "would provide good grounds for us to escalate if we wished," in the words of a top aide to then Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara.

The Times is printing a series of articles and documents from a study of the war ordered by McNamara before he left the Pentagon. Much of yesterday's account was based on summations by unnamed analysts who examined the documents and who, The Washington Post has been told, were by that time opponents of the war effort. Missing from the documents are White House and State Department papers other than some that reached the Pentagon.

Messages from Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor in Saigon just after the Tonkin Gulf affair and passage of the congressional resolution stress the necessity of avoiding any "rush to conference," as Taylor put it, with the Saigon regime, then in weak condition. The fact of the matter, he said on Aug. 9, 1964 was that "we engaged, both in Vietnam and Laos, in proxy actions against proxy agents of DRV (North Vietnam.)"

An Aug. 18 cable from the U.S. mission in Saigon to State said the first policy objective should be "to gain time for the Khanh government" then in power and therefore "we should be slow to get too deeply involved" in military action until "we have a better feel of the quality of our ally. In particular, if we can avoid it, we should not get involved militarily with North Vietnam and possibly with Red China if our base in South Vietnam is insecure and Khanh's army is tied down everywhere by the VC insurgency."

That message also spoke of avoiding "the possible requirement for a major U.S. ground force commitment" which, in fact, was to be made a year later.

However, the message recommended "developing a posture of maximum readiness for a deliberate escalation of pressure against North Vietnam, using Jan. 1, 1965, as a target D-day. We must recognize, however, that events may force U.S. to advance D-day to a considerably earlier date."

Sabotage Raids

The recommended course of action from Taylor and his Saigon associates was to resume sabotage raids against the North, suspended at the time of the Tonkin incidents and to "initiate air and ground strikes in Laos against infiltration targets" once plans were ready. The result, it was said, would be that "Hanoi will get the word that the operational rules with respect to the DRV are changing."

However, "the initiation of air attacks from SVN against NVN is likely to release a new order of military reaction from both sides, the outcome of which is impossible to predict." Precautionary moves urged included "landing a Marine force at Danang for defense of the airfield," which [illegible]

On Aug. 26 the Joint Chiefs of Staff said it did not agree with Taylor "that we should be slow to get deeply involved until we have a better feel for the quality of our ally. The United States is already deeply involved. The Joint Chiefs consider that only significantly stronger military pressures on the DRV are likely to provide the relief and psychological boost necessary for attainment of the requisite governmental stability and viability."

This JCS document, sent to McNamara, said a failure to continue earlier military moves in Laos and against the North "could signal a lack of resolve." The JCS told McNamara that "more direct and forceful actions" than the earlier measures "will in all probability be required" and that "the US program should also provide for prompt and calculated responses" to Vietcong and Pathet Lao Communist actions "in the form of air strikes and other operations against appropriate military targets in the DRV (North Vietnam)."

The effects of the Johnson decision to strike the North in retaliation for the Tonkin Gulf incident is reflected in the JCS statement to McNamara that "we should therefore maintain our prompt readinesss to execute a range of selected responses, tailored to the developing circumstances and reflecting the principles in the Gulf of Tonkin actions, that such counter-operations will result in clear military disadvantages to the DRV."

There was a reference in that memorandum to targets to be selected from a list "of 94 targets, recently forwarded to you by the Joint Chiefs of Staff . . ."

McNamara's close civilian assistant, the late John T. McNaughton, sent him a "plan for action" on Sept. 3. It began by saying that "the situation in South Vietnam is deteriorating" and that that was true "even before the government" in Saigon "sank into confusion last week."

"New Initiatives"

In a list of possible "new initiatives" McNaughton suggested sending "large numbers of U.S. forces, divisions of regular combat troops, U.S. air, etc., to 'interlard' with or take over functions of geographical areas from the South Vietnamese armed forces."

It was in this document that the idea was suggested that various limited actions in Laos and against North Vietnam "should cause apprehension, ideally increasing apprehension, in the DRV" and that "they should be likely at some point to provoke a military DRV response" and that "the provoked response should be likely to provide good grounds for us to escalate if we wished . . ."

McNaughton warned McNamara, however, that "because of the lack of 'rebuttal time' before election to justify particular actions which may be distorted to the U.S. public, we must act with special care . . ."

On Sept. 8 Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy sent President Johnson a memorandum of "the consensus" reached in discussions among Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Taylor, McNamara and Gen. Earle Wheeler, then chairman of the JCS.

The group recommended resumption of U.S. naval patrols, renewal of the secret 34A sabotage operations against the North, "limited" South Vietnamese "air and ground operations into the corridor areas of Laos" in "the near future" together "with Lao air strikes as soon as we can get" permission of Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Laotian government head.

But, the group went on, "these operations will have only limited effect." Hence the group laid down recommendations for futher steps.

The U.S. "should be prepared to respond on a tit-for-tat basis against the DRV in the event of any attack on U.S. units or any special DRV/VC action against SVN. The response for an attack on U.S. units should be along the lines of the Gulf of Tonkin attacks, against specific and related targets . . .

"The main further question is the extent to which we should add elements to the above actions that would tend deliberately to provoke a DRV reaction, and consequent retaliation by us. . . . We believe such deliberately provocative elements should not be added in the immediate future, while the GVN is still struggling to its feet. By early October, however, we may recommend such actions depending on GVN progress and Communist reaction in the meanwhile, especially to U.S. naval patrols.

continued

WASHINGTON STAR
15 JUN 1971

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Warnke Hits Times' Report

By ORR KELLY
Star Staff Writer

Paul C. Warnke, who was one of the top Pentagon officials during the Johnson administration, says he does not think either Congress or the public was seriously misled as the U.S. slipped into the Vietnam war in 1964 and 1965.

Warnke, who is now a frequent spokesman for the Democratic Party in the field of foreign affairs, gave his personal views in an interview prompted by the publication in the New York Times of a massive Pentagon report on the preliminaries and the early years of the war.

"I think publication in this way is a shame," Warnke said, "because it tends to make a lot of good people look bad."

The Vietnam archives now being published by the Times were ordered collected by Robert S. McNamara when he was defense secretary, Warnke said, because "he felt it very important that the historians not be denied the facts."

Leslie H. Gelb, a Pentagon official who now works at the Brookings Institution, was made project director.

Since most of the 30 to 40 persons involved were in the military and the others were borrowed from various offices in the Pentagon, the project did not have a budget of its own, Warnke said.

"This was not a history of the war. It was an effort at preservation," Warnke said. "It is necessarily incomplete."

One major gap is that those involved in compiling the documents and writing the narrative that tried to put them in perspective were forbidden to conduct interviews with those involved. Drafts of the document were not passed around for comment, as is normal with most Pentagon papers.

For this reason, memos contained in the document may not accurately reflect a person's personal opinions, since it is imposible to tell what directions he may have had or what context it was written in, Warnke said.

Warnke, who is now a law partner of Clark Clifford, last defense secretary of the Johnson administration, went to the Pentagon as general counsel in 1966 and became assistant secretary for international security affairs on Aug. 1, 1967, holding the post until after the change in administrations.

He was thus not personally involved in the events of 1964 but he read the document now being published by the Times when he was in the Pentagon. The published excerpts make it appear that the public and Congress were misled about events in Vietnam and U.S. policy, but Warnke does not agree.

"The government made no secret of its policy of helping South Vietnam put down a Communist-assisted insurgency," he said. "There was no question of what side we were on . . . The only question was tactics."

WASHINGTON STAR
JUN 1971

U.S. to Seek Injunction; LBJ's Decision Revealed

DECISION

President Johnson decided on April 1, 1965, to commit U.S. ground troops to offensive action in South Vietnam, but the decision was withheld from the American public for more than two months, according to Pentagon records.

The records show that the first public indication of the shift in Vietnam policy was on June 8, 1965, and that Johnson did not fully reveal the breadth of his decision until July.

The steps that led to the massive deployment of U.S. forces in South Vietnam and the change in strategy are the themes in the third of a series of articles by the New York Times, based on a massive and secret report by the Pentagon on U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia.

The study was commissioned in 1967 by then Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara. It covered U.S. policy in Indochina from World War II to the spring of 1968 when the Paris peace talks convened.

The Times says the Pentagon study was obtained from other sources through the investigative reporting of Neil Sheehan. The series was researched and written over three months by Sheehan and other staff members.

The Times' first story Sunday covered events before the Tonkin Gulf incidents of late summer 1964, through planning that lead to full-scale air war. The second installment covered the months between the Tonkin Gulf incident and beginning of the air war in March 1965—a decision reached, but not revealed, during Johnson's presidential campaign.

Johnson's decision to commit ground troops, according to the Pentagon record, was recognized as a "departure from long-held policy" that had "momentous implications." The study alluded to the policy axiom since the Korean war that another land war in Asia should be avoided.

Johnson's Orders

Although the president's decision was a "pivotal" change, the Pentagon analyst wrote, "Mr. Johnson was greatly concerned that the step be given as little prominence as possible."

A National Security Action Memorandum on April 6 spelled out the decision. It instructed council members: "The president desires . . . premature publicity be avoided by all possible precautions. The actions themselves should be taken as rapidly as practicable, but in ways that should minimize any appearance of sudden changes in policy . . ."

In the spring of 1965, the study shows, the administration counted on air assaults to break Hanoi's will and persuade North Vietnam to halt Viet Cong insurgency in the South.

"Once set in motion, however," the study says, "the bombing effort seemed to stiffen rather than soften Hanoi's backbone. . . . After a month of bombing with no response from the North Vietnamese, optimism began to wane."

The U.S. at that point faced essentially two options, the study says—to withdraw unilaterally and leave the South Vietnamese to fight for themselves, or to commit ground forces.

The April 1 Decision

Drastic increases in the scope and scale of hte bombing were rejected initially because of the risk of Chinese intervention.

And so within a month, the account continues, with the administration recognizing that bombing would not work quickly enough to prevent collapse of the South, the crucial decision was made to put the two Marine battalions already in the South—assigned to static defense—on the offense.

Because of Johnson's desire to keep the shift from defense to offense imperceptible to the public, the April 1 decision received no publicity "until it crept out almost by accident in a State Department release on 8 June," the study says.

By July 28, when the president himself announced the increase of troop strength, which had been slowly and inconspicuosly bulding in South Vietnam during the spring, 75,000 troops were in South Vietnam.

Two days later, the Joint Chiefs approved additional deployment, involving 193,887 U.S. troops, and subsequently won Johnson's approval. By the end of 1965, 184,000 were actually in South Vietnam.

At a July 28 press conference, Johnson was asked if the additional forces implied any change in the policy of relying mainly on South Vietnamese troops for offense and using American forces to guard installations and for emergency support.

"It does not imply any change in policy whatever," Johnson replied. "It does not imply any

continued

"The Implications"

Accompanying the decision to give Gen. William C. Westmoreland, then U.S. commander in South Vietnam, enough troops to embark on the search-and-destroy tactic he had been advocating through the spring, "was a subtle change in emphasis," the Pentagon record says.

"Instead of simply denying the enemy victory and convincing him that he could not win, the thrust became defeating the enemy in the South. This was sanctioned implicitly as the only way to achieve the U.S. objective of a non-Communist South Vietnam," the study says.

"The acceptance of the search-and-destroy strategy . . . left the U.S. commitment to Vietnam open-ended. The implications in terms of manpower and money are inescapable.

"Final acceptance of the desirability of inflicting defeat on the enemy rather than merely denying him victory opened the door to an indeterminate amount of additional force," says the study.

Precisely what President Johnson and McNamara expected their decisions of July to bring within the near future "is not clear," the study says.

"But there are manifold indications that they were prepared for a long war."

The views of McNamara, who commissioned the study during a period of disenchantment with U.S. policy, are unclear, the study says, "because there is so little of him in the files."

It adds that "from the records, the secretary comes out much more clearly for good management than he does for any particular strategy" during debate over the buildup.

The Pentagon analysts, the Times has noted, did not have full access to White House documents, so only a sketchy account of Johnson's role is given. However, "There is no question that the key figure in the early 1965 buildup was the president," the report says.

Both the decision to embark on full-scale air war against the North and to commit ground forces and use them in offensive action were strongly debated within the administration.

Before opening of the air war, warnings came both from Undersecretary of State George W. Ball, long known as a dissenter on Vietnam, but also from John A. McCone, Central Intelligence Agency director — who felt the projected actions were not strong enough.

The Ball Memo

Ball's dissent was embodied in a memo circulated on June 28, the Pentagon report says.

"Convinced that the U.S. was pouring its resources down the drain in the wrong place," the study says, Ball proposed that the U.S. "cut its losses" and withdraw. He reiterated this in a July 1 memo to the president, the study reports.

But Johnson, the Pentagon narrative says, now was heeding the counsel of Westmoreland to embark on full-scale ground action.

The study for the period concludes that Johnson and most of his administration were in no mood for compromise.

As the air war continued, the study says, there was also a shift in its prosecution — from reprisal for specific enemy actions to a will-breaking tactic, a shift supported by Ambassador to Saigon Maxwell Taylor, "to inflict such pain or threat of pain . . . that (Hanoi) would be compelled to order a stand-down of Viet Cong violence," in the words of the study.

As the debate over the buildup continued, and Westmoreland argued for the search-and-destroy tactic as opposed to the more narrow "enclave" strategy of initial U.S. ground forces, several major military victories by the Viet Cong in May and June provided the impetus for the final adoption of Westmoreland's strategy.

Vietnam Disclosure Presents Insufficient Facts

The unauthorized disclosure of a top-secret report on the Vietnam war made during the Johnson administration and just printed in the press gives the impression that the plans for bombing North Vietnam were somehow related to a form of political expediency.

Discussions as to strategy undoubtedly were held from day to day during the last administration, and these had a bearing on just when an active air war was begun against North Vietnam. The documents, which have been somehow leaked, show that there were disagreements, as was natural with such complicated questions.

From the spring of 1964 to the time when the Gulf of Tonkin resolution was adopted by Congress in August 1964 and the start of the concentrated bombing of North Vietnam in 1965, air strikes were considered and debated by the Johnson administration. These naturally were kept a secret.

But the lengthy documents, which have gotten into the hands of the press, are not an adequate presentation of all the facts. They could not possibly tell of the details of discussions between the President and the Department of State or between the latter department and its representatives abroad. Nor could they cover the reports of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The chief executive has available information from a variety of sources, and he is given memoranda from many different categories of advisers. He makes decisions after he has read a number of reports — not merely studies developed by military advisers to what might be done to carry the war to a successful conclusion.

For the United States has not just been fighting a war against the North Vietnamese. It has been fighting also against the military help supplied by the Soviet Union and by Red China.

Thus, for instance, on Monday of this week, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird said that the Russians have just delivered "highly sophisticated weapons systems" to Egypt and that they furnished $1.65 billion of military aid to Egypt from 1967 to 1970 and approximately half that amount during 1970.

It is not known exactly how much the Russians have supplied to North Vietnam, but some figures have been published which indicate that they have sent at least a billion dollars' worth of ammunition and weapons to the Hanoi government in the last two years. Military advisers and technicians have also been dispatched to North Vietnam.

When the United States is, in effect, confronted by the two big Communist nations, the strategy that is followed in a war such as developed in Indochina must be carefully examined in the light of what might happen throughout the world. If measures had not been taken to convince the government of North Vietnam and its allies that the United States would not virtually surrender, other governments might have lost faith in the ability of America to fulfill its commitments.

This was the issue in 1964, and it is still the issue today. The Johnson administration, of course, did not wish to engage in the bombing of North Vietnam and naturally spent a good deal of time discussing the effects of such a move.

The documents which have recently leaked out merely report on the various suggestions that were being made as to alternative courses of action. They hardly deserve the attention they are getting. For President Johnson did carry on a bombing campaign, and later halted it in the hope of getting peace negotiations started.

But the war has not been ended. The Nixon administration faces similar difficulties and is challenged by some of the same factors — namely, the future of South Vietnam and the effect that a Communist takeover of Indochina would have in other parts of Asia and elsewhere.

One wonders what purpose is served by spreading old reports taken from documents written from early 1964 to February 1965 while the bombing of North Vietnam was being planned. Their publication now merely tends to emphasize the alleged inability of the American government to deal with the complex problems in Southeast Asia.

The focus should be on what the Soviet Union and Red China have been doing to help the North Vietnamese to combat the efforts of the United States to secure for the people of South Vietnam the benefits of the right of self-determination.